

# 2020

The sky was painted a peculiar grey, just dark enough to cast a gloom over the city, as the rain came down in sheets. The streets, normally loud and crowded, were all but empty, with only the occasional unlucky passer-by hurrying for cover.

Some would regard this weather as the worst kind - not serious enough to invoke worry, but severe enough to cancel plans and make one long for sunshine. And yet, there was a handful of individuals who always welcomed the rain, for there was always a certain peace that accompanied it. She, was one of them.

Sue was blithely strolling down the road which led to the New York city's 'Downing Museum of Historical Artifacts and Modern Art'.

Upon her umbrella came perky sounds of capering raindrops that brought her a sense of ease. As the rain became more intense, it began to soak the bottom of the pale blue jeans she wore, deepening the denim to a stronger hue, and bringing her partly dirty boots to a glossy water shine.

Dropping her umbrella into the bin, Sue nodded at the security guard, who smiled back, letting her in without checking her ID. There was no need to when he came as often as he did.

The museum, though never extremely crowded, had almost no visitors because of the rain, and the sound of her heels on the hard floor echoed with each step. When she reached her favourite sector, she stopped in the large entryway and smiled, regarding the room with keen eyes. The walls were painted white, adorned with grand paintings framed in ornate gold, each large enough to rival those at Versailles, and a skylight took the place of a high ceiling, the familiar grey sky showing through.

Reaching inside her trench coat, she retrieved her sketchpad, and began her usual walk around the perimeter of the room, pausing just often enough to let pencil glide across paper. If minutes passed or hours, she could not tell, her mind solely on the art in front of her.

"Ah, Artemisia Gentilesh. An impeccable artist, though I must admit, I much prefer Rembrandt."

Nearly falling from shock, she turned swiftly towards the direction of the baritone voice, gripping her pencil as though it would be much use if she needed to engage in self-defence. Seeing that the man before her, though tall and slightly older, did not seem to mean any harm, she relaxed slightly, but still said nothing.

"I'm sorry if I startled you, it wasn't my intention. It just appeared that you were very immersed in your work," he raised his hands, hoping to prove his point. She sighed and nodded.

"No, I'm sorry for freaking out. I just wasn't expecting to run into anybody. It's usually empty here when it rains."

"Ah, and here I thought I was the only one who knew about that. I guess the secret's out," he joked, smiling warmly.

"Do you come here often? I've never seen you here before."

"I used to, all the time. It's been a while though." He looked around the room longingly before turning back to her. "Are you an art student? Or history, perhaps?"

She smiled shyly. "No, I'm majoring in psychology. But history and art have always fascinated me just the same."

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"Really? My father was a clinical psychologist, actually. Maybe that's why I prefer Rembrandt; the expressions he portrays are just impeccable."

"No way! The emotions Gentilesh depicts are much more reflecting of human nature. I guess she's the most underrated painter ever"

"I suppose I should take your word for it. You are the psychology student here."

But I beg to differ on your latter opinion, What I believe, is that Auerelius Dalia is the most underappreciated artist that ever existed. He manoeuvred the style of bends and swirls, and implemented the sfumato technique in his works much before Van Gough and Picasso.

All his paintings are about misery, existentialism and the fundamental nature of everything.

"Leonardo Da Vinci's art, too has similar themes, right?" she said in a tone which implied that she wasn't very familiar with the enigmatic and arcane concepts of the perplexing painter .

"Yes, Dalia gained a little recognition after historians unearthed and divulged the fact that Da Vinci got an inspiration to paint only after musing on Dalia's works.

"That's interesting" she said, with a wry smile that feigned intrigue.

"Oh, by the way are you a student, too?" she questioned, regarding his peacoat and tie.

"I'm getting my doctorate in philosophy this year, and I plan on becoming a professor afterwards," he explained.

"Hmm, it must be nice having it all figured out," she sighed, looking down at her sketchpad.

"Do you not have any idea what you want to do?" He moved closer, glancing down at her sketch.

"Not really. I mean, I'll be graduating next semester, but I don't know what I want to do with my degree." Slightly embarrassed, she drew a few more lines across the page, before looking up at him. Coughing lightly, she looked back to the painting in front of her. "I guess that's why I come here. To get lost, hoping to gain some perspective from it."

"Understandable. But, if you don't mind me asking, why did you choose psychology, when you most certainly could have made a career out of art?" She flushed slightly from the compliment before regarding him thoughtfully.

"Well, I suppose I always wanted to help people. More specifically, to help people understand themselves, much like how art helps me understand myself. But, I'm not sure if I want to pursue clinical psychology."

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"I don't want to tell you what to do, so take this with a grain of salt, but if you don't want to pursue clinical, then you can always help others as a counsellor or social worker."

She nodded, just as the security guard walked into the room, letting them know that the museum was closing soon. Nodding, she gathered her things and they walked back to the entrance, making a comfortable conversation on the way. Once they were outside, she opened her umbrella and turned to him, smiling ruefully. "I'm heading this way," she pointed.

"Okay," he paused. "Have a nice evening."

"You too. And thank you, for the perspective. It really was helpful."

He chuckled. "I'm glad. If you're ever looking for more perspective, you know where to find me."

"In the museum on a rainy day?" she smirked.

He gave a strained smile and waved his hand.

She laughed, eyes twinkling. "I guess I'll see you then."

He stood by the entrance of the museum, watching her until she turned a corner, and, with a worried and uneasy countenance, he raised his own umbrella and scrambled down the path, unconcerned about his expensive trousers getting wet, because he had something more critical and urgent to think about.

No matter what, he had to save his grandma Sue, from dying tomorrow, unless he wanted wipe out his own existence.